

STAR BLAZER

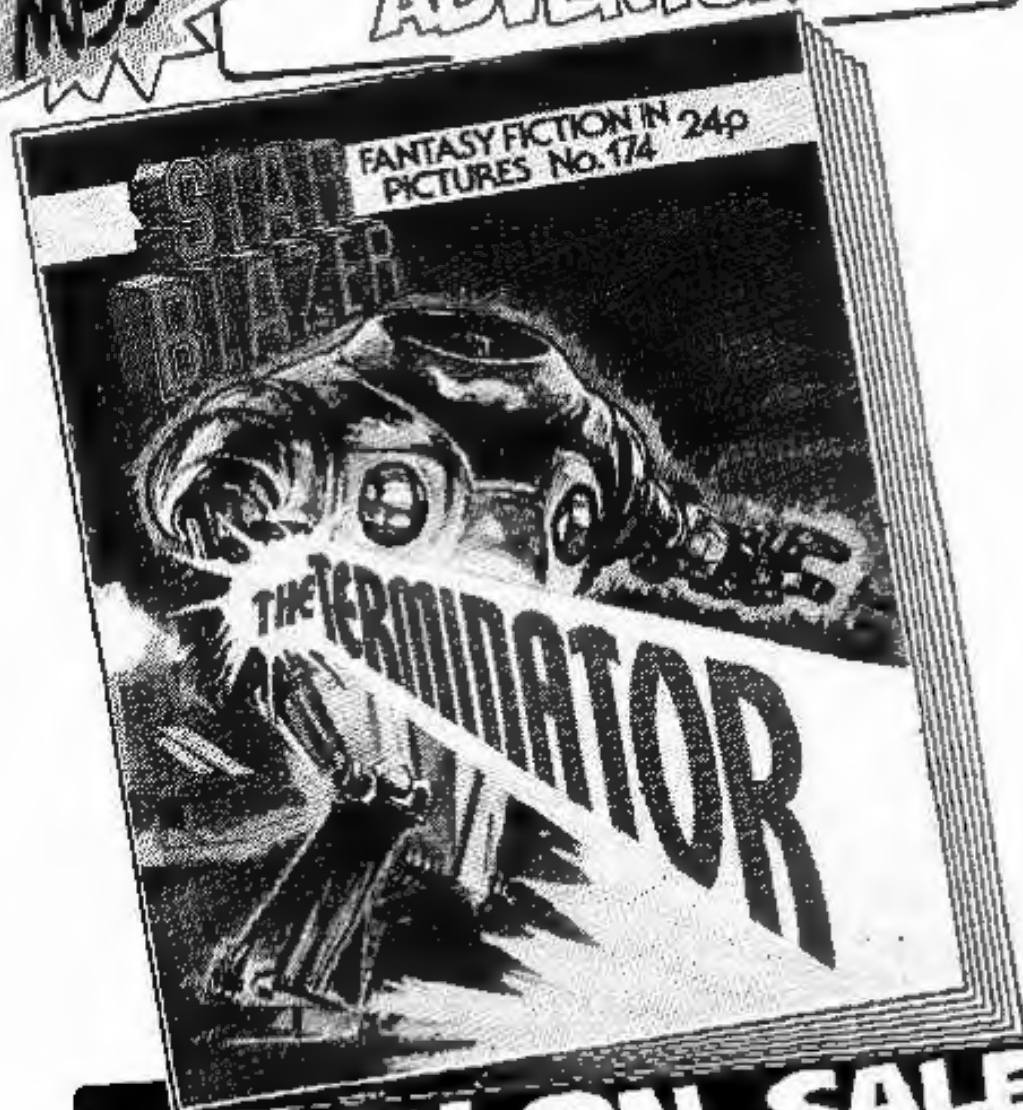
FANTASY FICTION IN
PICTURES No. 175 24p



The BLACK LORD



DO NOT MISS THIS MONTH'S OTHER
ACTION-PACKED
ADVENTURE




NOW ON SALE

Do you have a favourite story or character? Perhaps you'd like to drop a line to Star Blazer's head droid telling him why you liked, or disliked a story. Fill in the coupon below, or copy it out on a piece of paper and send it to: STAR BLAZER, D. C. THOMSON AND CO. LTD., 185 FLEET ST., LONDON EC4A 2HS.

NAME AGE
 FAVOURITE STORY
 FAVOURITE CHARACTER
 COMMENTS

The BLACK LORD

IT WAS A TIME LONG AFTER EARTH'S SEVENTH ICE AGE. DYNASTIES HAD FALLEN, BUT CIVILISATION OF A SORT WAS RETURNING — AND SOME OF THE ANCIENT TECHNOLOGY HAD BEEN RESTORED. BUT THERE WERE THOSE WHO WERE ABLE TO USE A FAR GREATER POWER... THE DARK ARTS... MAGIC... SORCERY... AND ONE WAS THE BLACK LORD.



HEAR ME NOW! SOON MY KINGDOM WILL
EXTEND BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS OF
LANDSLIDE IN THE NORTH, AND THE GREAT
GLACIER RIVER IN THE EAST. THE TWILIGHT
WILL FALL UPON THIS WORLD CASTING MY
SHADOW OVER ALL THINGS LIVING AND
MECHANICAL!

IN A REGION KNOWN AS DALOS, THERE RULED THE ONE WHO WAS KNOWN AS THE BLACK LORD. HIS LAIR WAS IN THE SWAMP OF ILLUSION, AND HIS HEART WAS SAID TO BE AS DARK AS EBONY.

TWO OF THE BLACK LORD'S SUBJECTS WATCHED FROM THEIR HUMBLE HOME.

SOLDIERS, FATHER!

BAH! THOSE OAFS RIDE THEIR MOUNTS TO THE POINT OF DESTRUCTION. YOU'RE LUCKY IF YOU GET ANY PAYMENT FROM THE BLACK LORD'S MEN. BETTER STAY OUT OF SIGHT, TOME. I'LL DEAL WITH THEM ALONE.




TOME, THE BLACKSMITH'S SON, WAS WORRIED.

BE CAREFUL, FATHER. YOUR TEMPER HAS GOT YOU INTO TROUBLE BEFORE WITH THE BLACK LORD'S MEN.

TRUE, SON, BUT I AM THE ONLY BLACKSMITH AROUND. THEY NEED MY SERVICES.






MY STEED NEEDS SERVICE,
BLACKSMITH! BE SHARP
ABOUT IT. TELL YOUR WIFE
TO FETCH REFRESHMENTS
WHILE WE WAIT.

YES, CAPTAIN!

IT'S HAWKWAY — THE
WORST OF THEM ALL!




THE MAIN SERVO UNIT IS FRACTURED. I MUST REPAIR IT.

THEN DO SO!

IT'S AN EXPENSIVE ITEM! YOU SOLDIERS ARE NOT NOTED FOR SETTLING YOUR BILLS. I'LL NEED PAYMENT IN ADVANCE.

THE BLACK LORD'S ARMY WAS COMPOSED OF CRIMINALS AND MERCENARIES. THEY RULED WITH THE SWORD ...



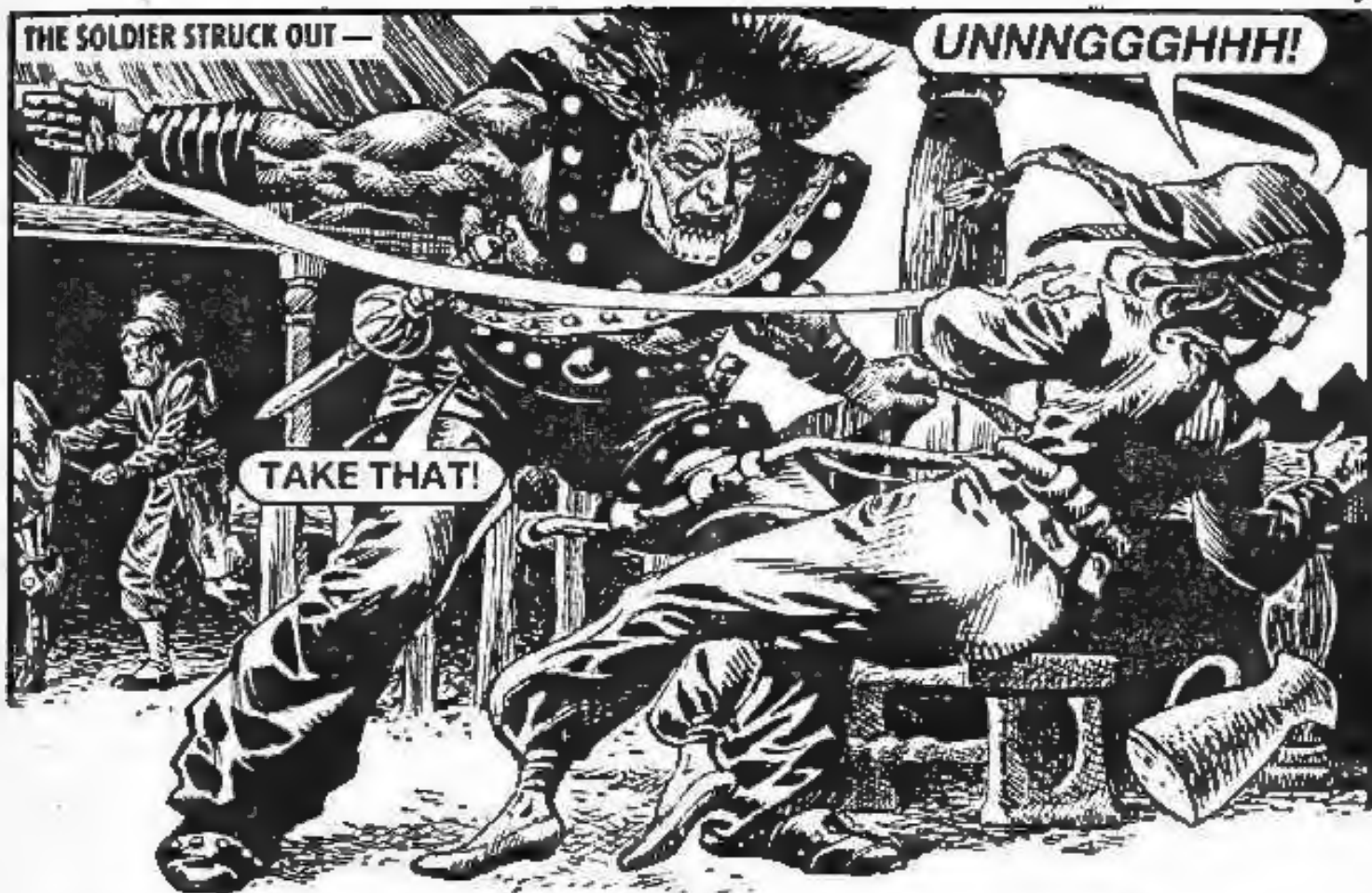
HA! HA! HA! YOU HAVE A NERVE, BLACKSMITH! I COULD CUT YOU DOWN RIGHT NOW — YET YOU SHOW NO FEAR. A PITY SOME OF MY MEN DON'T HAVE THE SAME COURAGE. YOU'LL GET YOUR MONEY.

MEANWHILE ...



I'M SORRY, SIR! IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.

CLUMSY FOOL!





STRIKE A DEFENCELESS
WOMAN, WOULD YOU?

DON'T, FATHER!

STAY OUT OF
THIS, BOY!

A SOLID FIST CONNECTED
WITH THE SOLDIER'S HEAD.



I'LL SOON WHITTLE
YOU DOWN TO SIZE!

MY FATHER HAS NO SWORD!



THEN HE SHOULD NOT HAVE
ATTACKED SOMEONE WHO HAS.

BUT BEFORE THE SOLDIER COULD ATTACK, THE BLACKSMITH THREW A SCREWDRIVER WITH ALL HIS MIGHT!

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URRRGGGGHHH!

HE'S KILLED HIM! A MISTAKE! HE KNOWS THE PENALTY FOR SUCH A THING.





AT THAT MOMENT HAWKWAY FIRED HIS CROSSBOW ...

... BUT THE HEAD WAS BLUNT AND THE SHAFT CONTAINED A POWERFUL CHARGE OF ELECTRICITY. IT WAS A DEVICE USED TO STUN AND NOT TO KILL.



THAT NIGHT AS TOME WALKED, DEEP IN THOUGHT.





ARE YOU HURT?

A LITTLE BRUISED, THAT'S ALL. I'M A STRANGER TO THIS LAND. WIDESPREAD POVERTY AND CRIME — ARE THESE THINGS NORMAL AROUND HERE? I HAD HEARD THIS KINGDOM WAS INHABITED BY BARBARIANS — PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED!

THE BLACK LORD RULES THIS KINGDOM — AND HE HAS NO RESPECT FOR THE RULE OF LAW. HIS SOLDIERS ARE EVEN WORSE THAN THOSE WHO ATTACKED YOU.

HOW INTERESTING! YOU MUST JOIN ME FOR A MEAL AS REPAYMENT FOR YOUR KIND DEED.

AT THAT MOMENT, DEEP IN THE SWAMP OF ILLUSION ...

A BLACKSMITH SLEW ONE OF MY TROOPERS IN COMBAT. THE BLACKSMITH'S SKILL IN REPAIRING THE BEASTS OF METAL ■ WELL KNOWN. IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO LOSE HIM.

ENOUGH! KILL HIM ... I HAVE OTHER MATTERS TO CONSIDER.



■ IN EATING HOUSE, THE OLD MAN SPOKE —

HEAR ME, FRIENDS. I HAVE A STORY
FOR YOU, GATHER ROUND WHILE I TELL
YOU ABOUT A GREAT WARRIOR . . .

HIS NAME WAS RYEMAN, AND HIS
FIGHTING SKILL UNSURPASSED. HE
FOUGHT THOSE WHO SPURNED
CHIVALRY. IT WAS HE WHO
DEFEATED THE SLAVERMASTER OF
KARONDELA.

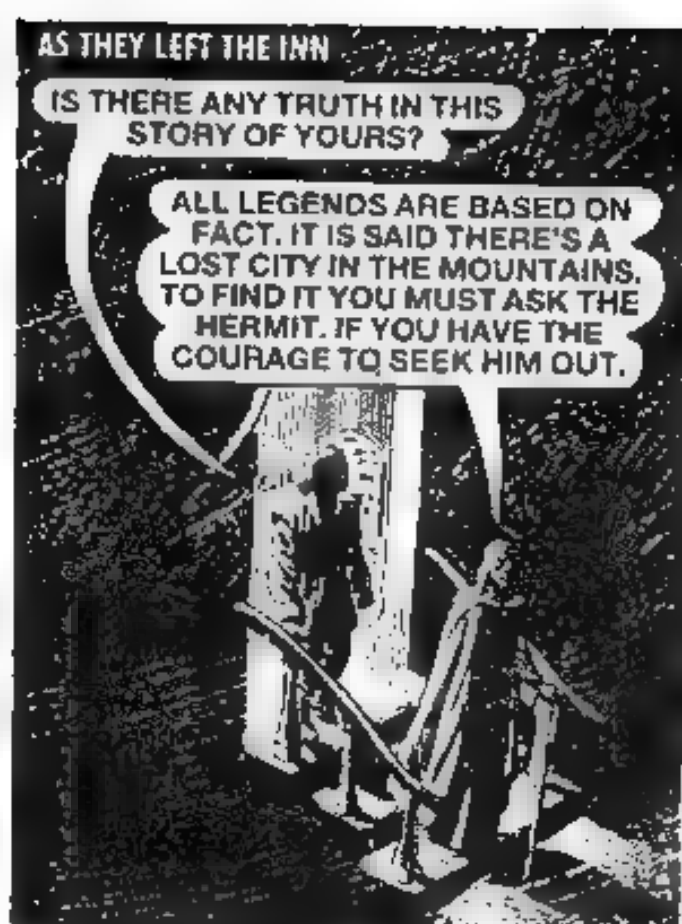
SO PERISH THOSE WHO
CHOOSE THE DARK PATHS!



A black and white comic book illustration depicting a warrior on a horse in a battle scene. The warrior, wearing a helmet and armor, is riding a horse and holding a sword aloft in his right hand. He has a determined expression. The horse is galloping forward. In the background, there are other soldiers and the chaos of battle. A large, winged figure, possibly a demon or a fallen angel, is perched on a rock in the upper right. The scene is filled with the sounds of battle, with various weapons and armor visible.

VICTORY IS OURS!

IT WAS HE WHO LED THE GREAT REBELLION
WHICH FREED THE SOUTHLANDERS. IT WAS
SAID HE WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED IN THE
LAST BATTLE...



DEEP IN THE SWAMP OF ILLUSION, THE BLACK LORD CONSULTED THE ORACLE —

*You are worried?
For what reason?*

THE STORYTELLER HAS ONLY TO
CONVINCE ONE PERSON — AND WE
MAY ALL BE THREATENED. THAT IS
WHY I HAVE TAKEN THE ADDED
PRECAUTION OF SENDING KELINOR
THE EAGLE TO HUNT HIM DOWN.

DEEP IN THE FOREST, MANY HOURS LATER, THEY BOTH
HEARD IT — THE FLUTTER OF MECHANICAL WINGS.



WHAT IS IT?

AN EAGLE! SOMETHING MUST
GOING ON. THE METAL BEASTS
SERVE ONLY THE BLACK LORD!



UARRGGGGHHH!

IT'S — IT'S KILLED HIM! MY ONLY
CHANCE IS TO TRY AND OUTRUN IT
IN THE FOREST.

TOME RAN, HOPING THE TREES WOULD SLOW THE CREATURE DOWN.

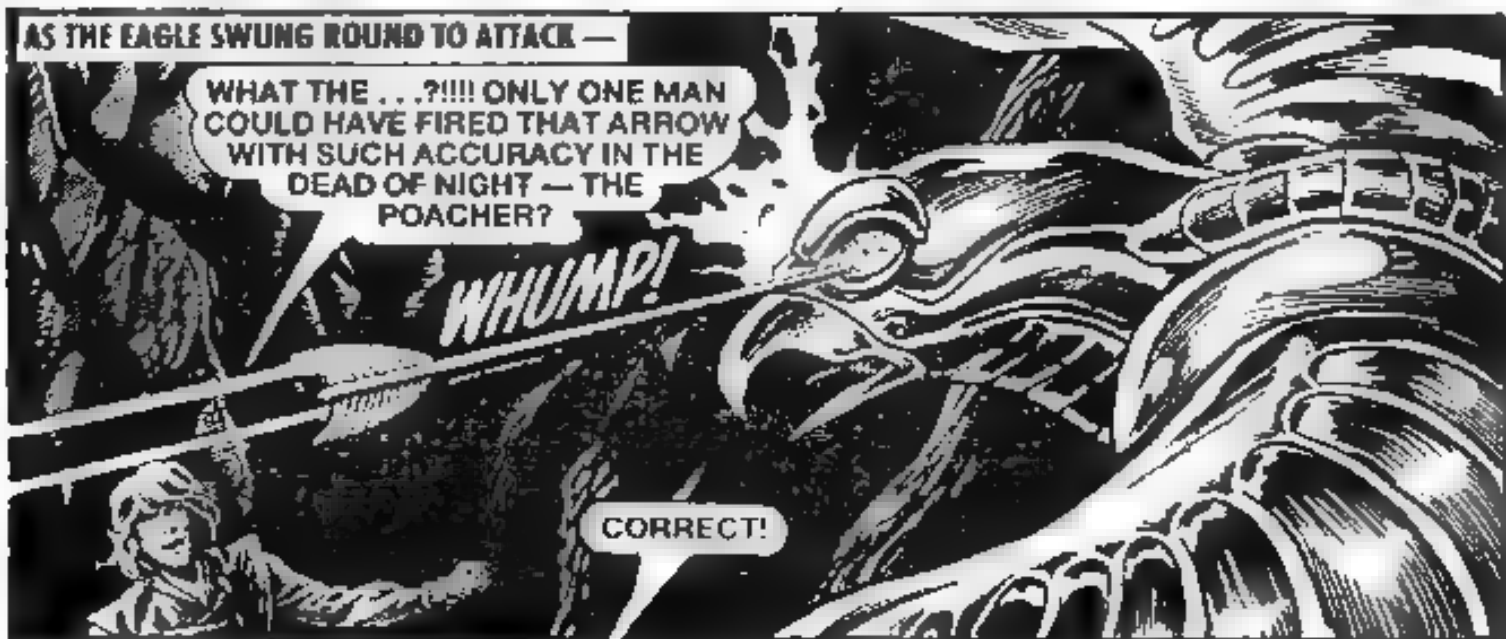
THE EAGLE ONLY ATTACKS ON THE BLACK LORD'S ORDERS. SO WHY SHOULD IT KILL THE OLD MAN? UNLESS HE TOO ■ FRIGHTENED BY THAT STORY! WHICH MEANS THIS RYEMAN MUST EXIST.

BUT THEN DISASTER STRUCK. IN THE POOR LIGHT TOME FAILED TO SEE THE ROOT OF A FELLED TREE.

AGHHH!



THE EAGLE HAS MISJUDGED ITS SWOOP THIS TIME — BUT NEXT TIME ROUND IT WILL TEAR OUT MY THROAT! AND THERE'S NO ESCAPE FOR ME. NOT FROM THOSE TALONS AND RAZOR-SHARP BEAK!



AS THE EAGLE SWUNG ROUND TO ATTACK —

WHAT THE . . . ?!!!! ONLY ONE MAN COULD HAVE FIRED THAT ARROW WITH SUCH ACCURACY IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT — THE POACHER?

WHUMP!

CORRECT!

THE FINDER OF THE ARROW APPEARED — THE POACHER, WHOSE DOMAIN WAS THE FOREST.

THIS SHOULD FETCH A GOOD PRICE. THE MECH-VETS ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR SPARE PARTS. IT WAS HUNTING YOU! THE SOLDIERS CAN'T BE FAR BEHIND.

JUST THEN ...

OVER THERE!

WE'LL NEVER
OUTRUN THEM!

TAKE MY SWORD
AND USE IT.

TOME HAD BEEN TAUGHT TO USE A SWORD BY HIS FATHER —

AARGH!

BETTER MOUNT THOSE HORSES
AND RIDE LIKE THE WIND!



NOW WHAT?



THE SOLDIERS ARE IN MY
DOMAIN! RELAX, BOY, AND TRY
NOT TO GET HIT BY ONE OF
THOSE CROSSBOW BOLTS.

THE POACHER ACTIVATED ONE OF HIS TRAPS — LAID OUT FOR JUST THIS SORT OF EVENTUALITY!

SHARPENED LOGS TUMBLED DOWN.

LOOK OUT!

GET BACK!

AAARRRGGGHHH!

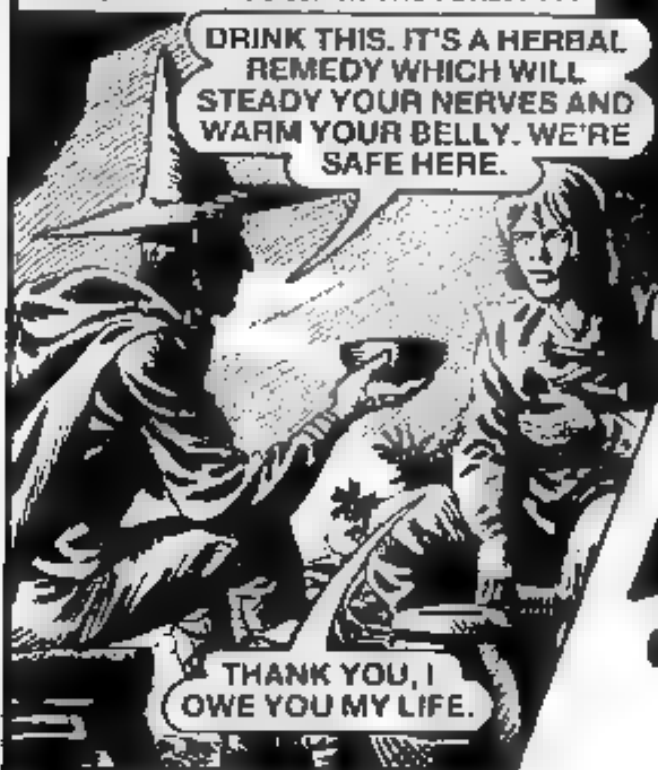
URRRGGGGHHHH!



WORD OF THE DISASTER REACHED THE BLACK LORD.



LATER, IN A CAVE DEEP IN THE FOREST...



TOME TOLD HIM ABOUT HIS FATHER AND THE OLD MAN'S STORY.



PLANS HAD BEEN LAID TO FIND TOME. HAWKWAY
HAD GATHERED HIS MEN. IT WAS THEN THAT IT
ARRIVED...



WHAT IS
IT, SIR?

A FLYING ENGINE OF WAR,
SERGEANT. YOU'D BETTER GET
THE REST OF THE MEN OUT OF
THE FOREST. THAT THING IS
TAKING OVER THE SEARCH

THE MACHINE WAS ACTIVATED —



IT'S OPENING —
LIKE A GIANT FLOWER!

A FLOWER OF DEATH! AND I
PITY OUR TWO FUGITIVES.
THEY WILL NOT HAVE A
PLEASANT END.

THE OBJECT BEGAN TO SPIN AS IT MOVED THROUGH THE FOREST.



QUICKLY! WE MUST
JOIN THE OTHERS!

IT HAD THE POWER TO DEMOLISH A CITY —
OR RAZE A LARGE FOREST IN A MATTER OF HOURS!

BEFORE LONG, TOME AND THE POACHER
WERE RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES.

THIS WAY! WE
STILL HAVE A CHANCE!

I THOUGHT YOU
SAID WE WERE SAFE?

LOOK OUT!

I HAVE SEEN A BALL OF LIGHTNING LIKE
THIS ... BUT NEVER SO MUCH OF IT!
HAS THE WORLD GONE CRAZY?





IT TOOK THEM A WEEK TO REACH THE MOUNTAINS. THE BLACK LORD'S POWER EXTENDED ONLY TO THE BORDERS OF DALOS.

THIS HERMIT — ARE YOU
SURE HE LIVES UP HERE?

THE OLD MAN MENTIONED
THE GREAT PEAK. WE MUST
FIND HIM!

SUDDENLY, IN A BLUR OF SPEED THE
POACHER LOOSED AN ARROW!

HOW DO...?

SHOW YOURSELF!

A DWARF?

UGLY LITTLE FELLOW —
AND NOT TOO PLEASED TO
FIND MY SHAFT IN HIS
SHOULDER. HE'S LUCKY I
AIMED MERELY TO
WOUND.

HOW DARE YOU!

GET THEM!

THERE'S MORE
OF THEM!

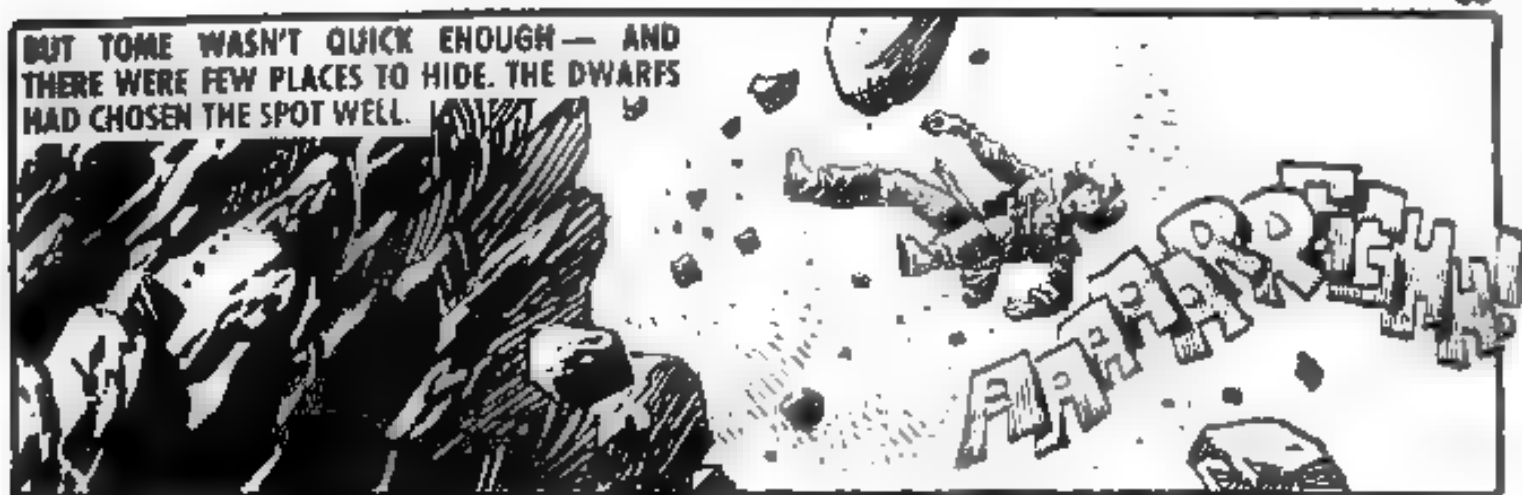
BAH! THOSE MIDGETS
DON'T SCARE ME. PERHAPS
THEY'D ALSO LIKE A TASTE
OF MY ARROWS. I HAVE
PLENTY TO GO AROUND!

BUT THE DWARFS HAD
OTHER PLANS IN MIND —
TOME AND THE POACHER
HAD WALKED INTO A
PREPARED AMBUSH!

THEY'VE STARTED
A LANDSLIDE!

WE'D BETTER FIND SOME
COVER — AND QUICKLY!

BUT TOME WASN'T QUICK ENOUGH — AND THERE WERE FEW PLACES TO HIDE. THE DWARFS HAD CHOSEN THE SPOT WELL.



THE POACHER HAD BEEN OVERWHELMED —

YOU'RE OUR HOSTAGE. AND IF NO ONE IS PREPARED TO PAY A RANSOM FOR YOU THEN YOUR LIFE WILL BE EXTINGUISHED! TAKE HIM AWAY!



TOME WOULD HAVE BEEN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE MOUNTAIN — IF HE HADN'T LANDED ON A LEDGE A FEW FEET DOWN.



MADE IT!

WHO ARE YOU?



THEY CALL ME THE HERMIT.

IN DALOS, TOME'S FATHER WAS ABOUT TO BE EXECUTED ...

IT IS THE BLACK
LORD'S MESSENGER.

THE BLACK LORD HAS SENT HIS
MESSENGER. PERHAPS HE WISHES
TO ADDRESS THE PEOPLE BEFORE
SENTENCE IS CARRIED OUT!



THE BLACK LORD'S VOICE CAME FROM A MECHANICAL EAGLE, EXACTLY THE SAME AS KELINOR.

THE PRISONER WILL BE RETURNED TO HIS CELL. I WISH TO USE HIM AS BAIT. THOSE ARE MY ORDERS. SEE TO IT THEY ARE CARRIED OUT.



YOU HEARD! CANCEL THE EXECUTION!

BAIT? THE BLACK LORD MUST BE EXPECTING TROUBLE.

HAWKWAY WAS NOT FROM DALOS. ■ WAS A MERCENARY, AND ALWAYS MADE IT A RULE TO FIGHT ■ THE SIDE OF THE FORCES MOST LIKELY TO WIN.

THE BOY AND THE POACHER MUST HAVE PERISHED IN THAT FIRE. WHAT POSSIBLE THREAT COULD THERE BE? UNLESS THERE'S SOMETHING THE BLACK LORD HASN'T TOLD ME.

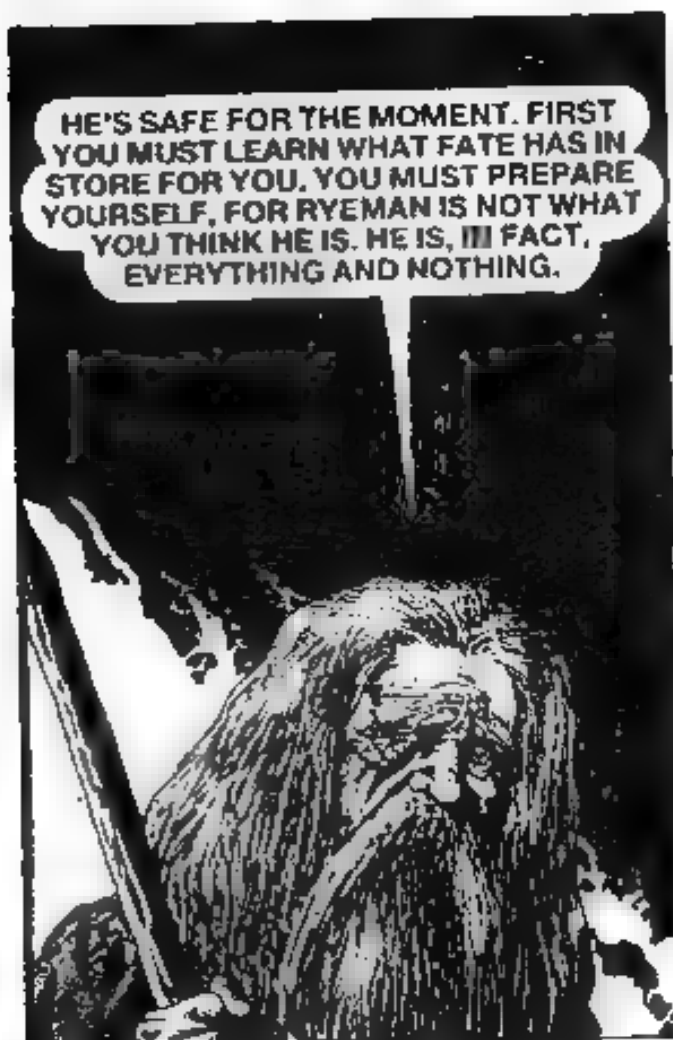


BACK IN THE MOUNTAINS . . .



SO THE STORYTELLER IS DEAD, AND YOU CAME TO SEEK RYEMAN. I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN ONE DAY. THAT IS WHY I MAKE IT A POINT TO GREET EACH TRAVELLER WHO PASSES THIS WAY.

BUT WHAT OF MY FRIEND? YOU SAY HE WAS TAKEN PRISONER BY THE DWARFS?




HE'S SAFE FOR THE MOMENT. FIRST YOU MUST LEARN WHAT FATE HAS IN STORE FOR YOU. YOU MUST PREPARE YOURSELF, FOR RYEMAN IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK HE IS. HE IS, IN FACT, EVERYTHING AND NOTHING.

TOME WAS TAKEN INTO A HUGE CAVERN, LIT FROM ABOVE BY A STRANGE CRYSTAL ROCK FORMATION.



THE LOST CITY!

THE ICE AGE WAS A CATACLYSMIC EVENT WHICH RAVAGED OUR PLANET. IT CAUSED THE LAND MASSES TO SHIFT. MILLIONS PERISHED — AND A NEW DARK AGE WAS BORN.



FORGET THE HISTORY LESSON —
AND FORGET THE RIDDLES, OLD
MAN! WHERE IS RYEMAN?

A MAN MAY DIE, TOME, BUT HIS
MEMORY LIVES ON. THAT IS THE
SECRET. THE RIDDLE WILL NOW BE
REVEALED.

A BRIGHT LIGHT BURST INTO LIFE —

WHAT'S THAT?

COURAGE, BOY! THE LIGHT
IS BRIGHT, BUT IT CANNOT
HARM YOU. SOON IT WILL
BE ALL AROUND YOU AND I
MUST LEAVE. MY TASK IS
FINISHED. I WISH YOU
WELL.

THE TEMPERATURE AROUND TOME FELL. IT FORMED AROUND HIM. THEN HE HEARD A NEW VOICE RINGING THROUGH THE CAVERN.

I... I CAN'T MOVE!

DON'T BE ALARMED! IT WILL LAST ONLY A FEW MINUTES. AFTER THAT YOU WILL FEEL NORMAL AGAIN.



ARE YOU RYEMAN?



IN SPIRIT ONLY. WHAT YOU SEE IS NOT REAL — IT IS ONLY A MANIFESTATION OF AN ANCIENT WISDOM. NOW PLEASE FOLLOW ME. YOUR FRIEND IS IN DANGER AND THERE IS NO TIME TO WASTE.

TOME FOLLOWED THE SPECTRE INTO A SMALL CHAMBER.

MY SWORD — TAKE IT!

IT LOOKS HEAVY!

NOT FOR LONG! YOUR BODY HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR THE NEXT STAGE. DURING WHICH I WILL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO YOU. ALREADY YOU FEEL YOURSELF GETTING STRONGER.

AGH! THE HEAT!

HAVE NO FEAR! THESE ARE DEVICES TO PREPARE YOUR BODY FOR WHAT LIES AHEAD. FOR IT IS YOU WHO WILL HAVE TO DEFEAT THE BLACK LORD AND FREE YOUR PEOPLE.

THE SWORD WILL HELP YOU. IT HAS GREAT POWERS.

TOME RAISED THE SWORD AND AN AMAZING TRANSFORMATION TOOK PLACE...

I CARRY YOUR MEMORY WITH ME!
TOGETHER WE WILL SLAY THE BLACK
LORD! MAY THE ANCIENT WISDOM
PROTECT US IN THIS QUEST!



TOME, IN HIS NEW SHAPE, HEADED FOR THE DWARF'S VILLAGE.

I COME FOR THE POACHER! RELEASE HIM — OR FACE THE WRATH OF MY SWORD!

THE BOASTING FOOL IS ALONE! STRIKE HIM DOWN!



WITH A SINGLE BLOW TOME CUT A THICK BRANCH—

LET ME DEMONSTRATE
MY POWERS...

HE USES MAGIC! FETCH THE
PRISONER! OR HE WILL SLAY US
ALL!

THE POACHER WAS
BROUGHT—


TOME? IS
THAT YOU?

YES... AS YOU SEE, IN A
DIFFERENT FORM.

WITH THE HELP OF THESE PEOPLE
WE CAN ATTACK THE PRISON AND
FREE MY FATHER. I'M SURE I CAN
CONVINCE THEM TO JOIN US. NOW
I'D BETTER TELL YOU WHAT
HAPPENED TO ME ...

AT THE BLACK LORD'S LAIR ...

CURSE YOUR PREDICTION! RYEMAN
DEAD! HE WAS KILLED — AFTER
HE BANISHED ME TO THIS PLACE.
BUT MY POWER HAS GROWN. SOON
I'LL BE READY TO LEAVE HERE.
NOTHING MUST STOP ME!



THE BOY HAS TAKEN UP RYEMAN'S
MANTLE — SO BE IT! HE'LL HAVE TO
FACE MY ARMY AND MY MECHA-
BEASTS. AND IF HE SURVIVES HE MUST
VENTURE IN HERE AND FACE ME. DEATH
WILL BE THE ONLY REWARD FOR HIS
IMPUDENCE!

TWO NIGHTS LATER, AT THE PRISON . . .

LOOK HOW THEY CLIMB!
LIKE MOUNTAIN GOATS.

LET'S HOPE THEY FIGHT
WITH EQUAL SKILL.
RESCUING MY FATHER
IS OUR FIRST TASK.
AND THOSE WHO HAVE
IMPRISONED HIM WILL
PAY WITH THEIR LIVES!



45
A ROPE LADDER WAS LOWERED AND TOME AND THE
POACHER MADE THEIR WAY TO THE TOP OF THE WALL.

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THE
SENTRY WHEN HE GOES PAST.

GOOD! AND MAKE SURE OUR LITTLE
FRIENDS POSITION THEMSELVES
WITH CARE. THEY MUST MAKE NO
MOVE UNTIL THEY HEAR THE
SIGNAL.



TOME DEALT WITH THE SENTRY, AND
HEADED FOR THE HORSES.

I STRIKE IN THE NAME
OF RYEMAN AND FREEDOM!

OUTSIDE —

WHAT WAS THAT NOISE,
SIR?

IT CAME FROM THE STABLES!
CALL OUT THE GUARD!

HAWKWAY
COULDN'T BELIEVE HIS EYES—

THIS CANNOT BE!

THERE ARE TOO MANY BEASTS
IN HERE FOR JUST THE NORMAL
PRISON STAFF.



TOME'S MEN HAD STARTED THEIR ATTACK ELSEWHERE.

KILL THEM! WE'VE BEEN PROMISED
TWO GOLD PIECES FOR EVERY SOLDIER
WE SLAY!

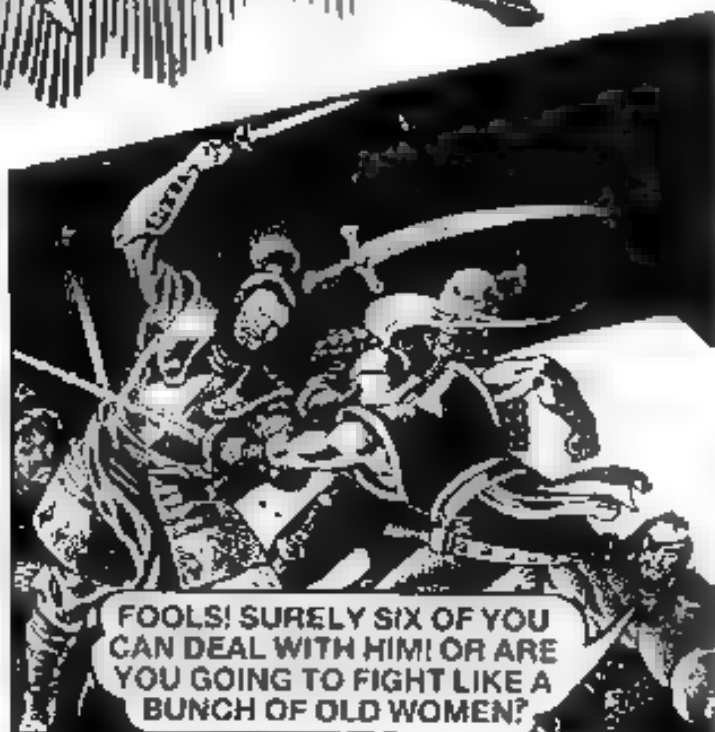


THE SOUND OF BATTLE DISTRACTED HAWKWAY FOR ONLY A SPLIT SECOND — BUT IT WAS ENOUGH!



TOME RECLAIMED HIS SWORD—

GET HIM!



FOOLS! SURELY SIX OF YOU CAN DEAL WITH HIM! OR ARE YOU GOING TO FIGHT LIKE A BUNCH OF OLD WOMEN?



I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!

SO THIS IS WHAT THE BLACK LORD FEARED? THAT SWORD HAS SOME KIND OF POWER.

HAWKWAY PREPARED TO SHOOT TOME, BUT WITH A DEFT FLICK OF HIS WRIST, TOME SENT A KNIFE HURLING THROUGH THE AIR.

A GOOD TRY, CAPTAIN!
THIS TIME IT DIDN'T WORK!

WE'RE LOSING! THERE WERE
MORE SOLDIERS THAN WE THOUGHT.

THE BLACK LORD USED THE
BLACKSMITH AS BAIT. HE KNEW
THERE WOULD BE AN ATTEMPT TO
RESCUE HIM.

YOUR WOUND IS BAD, BUT NOT
MORTAL. HELP ME — OR I'LL KILL
YOU HERE AND NOW! THE CHOICE
IS YOURS.

TOME WASN'T ABOUT
TO GIVE UP —

THERE'S A TUNNEL LEADING TO
THE CELLS. IT'S HARDLY EVER
USED.



MEANWHILE...

RELEASE THE PRISONER! THIS MAN
HAS A SWORD AT MY BACK!

I HOPE THEY OBEY YOU,
HAWKWAY. OR PERHAPS YOUR
MEN ALSO HATE YOU ENOUGH TO
WANT TO SEE YOU DEAD. THAT
WOULD INDEED BE IRONIC.

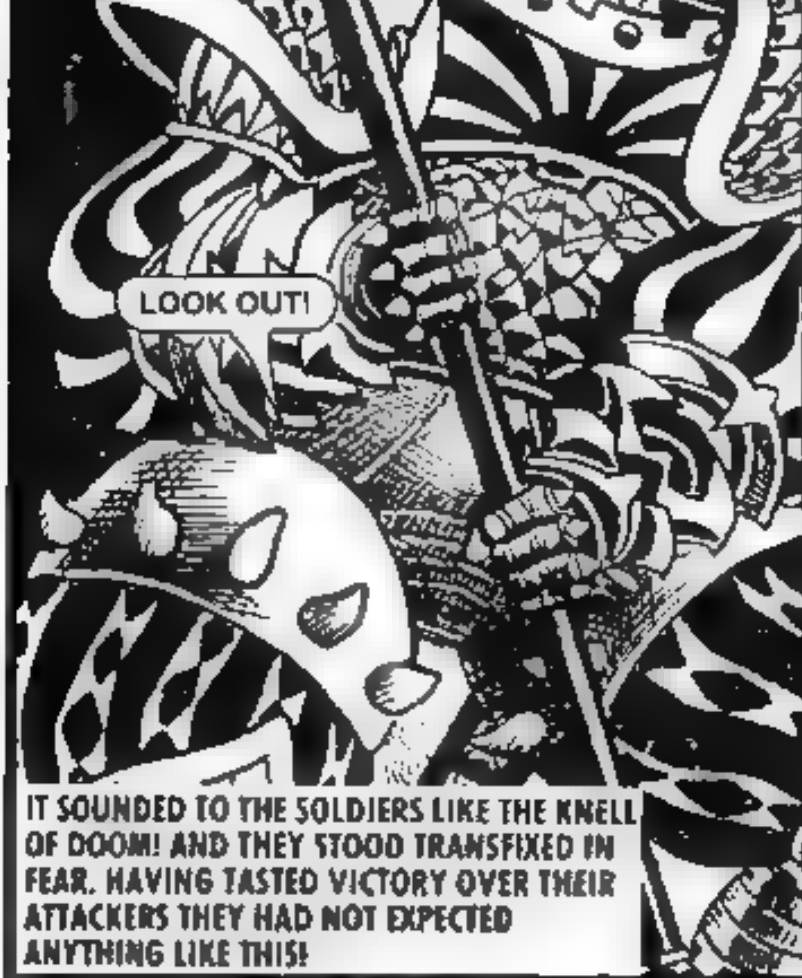
THE CELL DOOR WAS OPENED — AND THE
BLACKSMITH GAVE A GASP OF
ASTONISHMENT.

TOME! BUT HOW...?

NO TIME TO EXPLAIN, FATHER. WE
HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE. BUT
FIRST YOU'D BETTER DEAL WITH
THOSE TWO.

WITH PLEASURE!

HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO
ESCAPE! MY MEN ARE
EVERYWHERE. AND THEY'LL BE
LOOKING FOR ME.



ON THE FRINGES OF THE SWAMP OF ILLUSION, MUCH LATER—

TONIGHT I MUST SCOUT INSIDE THE SWAMP. ONLY THE SOLDIERS HAVE BEEN IN THERE. I WONDER WHAT MANNER OF PLACE IT IS?



TOME ENTERED THE SWAMP ON HIS OWN.

SO THIS IS THE LAIR OF THE BLACK LORD! AN EERIE PLACE AND SO QUIET. MY QUARRY LIVES IN THE CENTRE OF THIS HELLPIT — AND THAT BOAT SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY WAY I CAN GET TO HIM.



AT THAT MOMENT THE BLACK LORD'S MECHANICAL EAGLE APPROACHED TOME'S FATHER AND THE OTHERS.

FEAR NOT! I HAVE SHOT ONE ALREADY.

WHAT IS IT?



THE POACHER LET AN ARROW FLY—

AND NOW I HAVE
SHOT ANOTHER!

TOME WAS ALSO IN TROUBLE. A STRANGE FORCE FIELD
HAD DROPPED LIKE A CURTAIN, BLOCKING THE WAY
OUT OF THE SWAMP!

WHAT MANNER OF MAGIC ■
THIS? I CAN CUT THROUGH, BUT
THE HOLE IS IMMEDIATELY
FILLED IN AGAIN! I'M TRAPPED!
AND THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE
REASON...

THE BLACK LORD WANTS ME TO FACE HIM
ALONE. SO BE IT! I MUST USE MY LAST POWER
TO END HIS EVIL RULE OVER OUR LAND.

EARLY NEXT MORNING...

SOLIDERS ARE APPROACHING
— LOTS OF THEM!

THE EAGLE WAS GUIDED BY
A POWERFUL SONIC TRANSMITTER —
I HAVE AMPLIFIED IT. LET'S PRAY
THERE'S SUFFICIENT ENERGY LEFT IN
THE CREATURE'S POWER PACKS TO
USE IT.

SLAY THEM WHERE
THEY STAND! I WANT
NONE LEFT ALIVE —
THOSE ARE THE BLACK
LORD'S WISHES!

HERE GOES!

THE ATTACK CAME TO A SUDDEN HALT AS THE
BLACKSMITH'S DEVICE WAS ACTIVATED.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?



THE DEVICE HAD SENT A BEAM OF INTENSE SONIC ENERGY THROUGH THE AIR — SUFFICIENT TO CAUSE THE BRAINS OF THE METAL HORSES TO MALFUNCTION!

LET US STRIKE BEFORE THEY RECOVER FROM THEIR SURPRISE!



TAKE THAT!



THE FEROCITY OF THE ATTACK PROVED TOO MUCH FOR THE SOLDIERS.

A PRESENT FOR YOU, BLACKSMITH. THE LATE CAPTAIN HAWKWAY OF THE BLACK LORD'S ARMY. NOW OUR PRISONER AND STRIPPED OF HIS RANK!



TOME'S INSTINCT HAD TAKEN HIM TO THE ISLAND, BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE BLACK LORD.



WATER THAT TALKS?



TOME FELT THE DANGER BEHIND HIM AND WHIRLED ROUND — JUST THEN THE BLACK LORD APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE!

YOU ALMOST LOST YOUR HEAD, BOY!

BUT I DIDN'T!



THE GLOBE BEGAN TO OPEN OUT AS IT GOT CLOSER—

TAKE A REST, DARK ONE! I'LL
DEAL WITH YOU LATER!

JUST A LITTLE CLOSER...

TOME SLASHED WITH HIS SWORD.

SO MUCH FOR YOUR WAR
MACHINE, DARK ONE!

SWIFTLY TOME RETURNED TO THE SWORDFIGHT. NOW III WAS AT THE PEAK OF HIS POWER — AND IT SEEMED NOTHING WOULD STAND BETWEEN HIM AND VICTORY. THE BLACK LORD'S REIGN WAS ALMOST OVER.

YOU'VE RUN OUT OF TRICKS, MY LORD! AND SOON MY PEOPLE WILL BE FREE ONCE MORE.



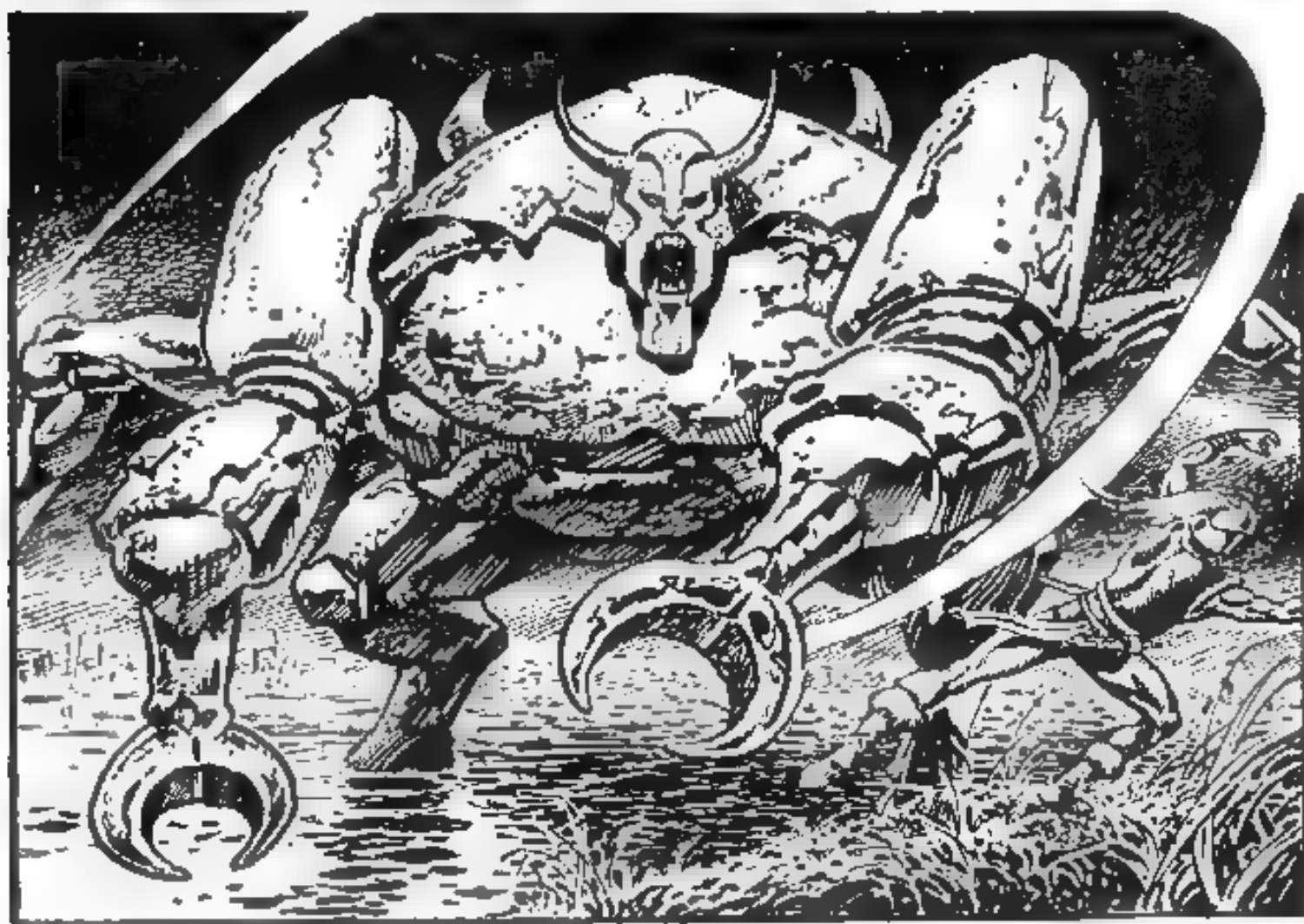
TWO MIGHTY BLOWS DID THE TRICK! THE EVIL ROBOT WAS NO MORE ...

PERISH — IN THE
NAME OF RYEMAN!


WELL DONE, BOY! BUT AT THIS
POINT TECHNOLOGY ENDS AND
SORCERY BEGINS! PREPARE
YOURSELF!

AS TOME WATCHED IN AMAZEMENT THE TWO
BROKEN MACHINES BEGAN TO REASSEMBLE THEMSELVES.


NOW WHAT? THERE SEEMS TO
BE NO END TO THIS FIEND'S
TRICKERY!



TOME THRUST HIS SWORD HOME, BUT ONCE AGAIN TOME WAS TROUBLED ... THIS TIME THE AWFUL TRUTH BEGAN TO DAWN ON HIM ...



NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU DESTROY MY MACHINE, IT WILL ALWAYS REBUILD ITSELF! A NEVER-ENDING PROCESS! HOW LONG CAN YOU LAST OUT, BOY? ASK YOURSELF THAT! HA! HA! HA!



HERE COMES ANOTHER ONE! EACH TIME THE MACHINE REAPPEARS IT SEEMS TO GET BIGGER AND MORE POWERFUL, WHILST I CAN ONLY GET WEAKER.

TOME DIVED INTO A DITCH AS THE CREATURE'S TAIL RAZED THE SURROUNDING TREES TO THE GROUND. AND THE ELUSIVE VOICE SPOKE AGAIN . . .

THERE IS NO ESCAPE FOR YOU, BOY! HA! HA! HA!

I'M NOT FINISHED YET, DARK ONE!

A GHOSTLY FIGURE APPEARED IN THE MIST.

RYEMAN!

YOU HAVE FOUGHT WELL, TOME. NOW YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME. FOR I HAVE COME TO GUIDE YOU ONE LAST TIME.

BRUTE STRENGTH ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH! YOU ARE STILL YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED IN THE WAYS OF A WARRIOR. THERE IS A POWER FAR GREATER THAN ANY OTHER WITHIN YOU. IT IS CALLED WISDOM. USE IT NOW BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

RYEMAN VANISHED AND TOME
STOOD UP. INSTEAD OF DOING
BATTLE HE LET HIS MIND AND
BODY RELAX.

RYEMAN IS RIGHT! THIS IS
THE SWAMP OF ILLUSION,
AND THE DARK ONE MUST
BE USING SOME FORM OF
SORCERY TO HIDE HIMSELF
FROM ME. I CALL UPON THE
ANCIENT WISDOM! REVEAL
THE TRUTH TO ME!

THE SWAMP DISAPPEARED—

SO! I HAVE FINALLY FOUND YOU!
SOME BLACK LORD YOU ARE!

YOU HAVE INTELLIGENCE, BOY! I WILL GIVE YOU
RICHES BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION! JOIN
FORCES WITH ME. TOGETHER WE CAN RULE
THIS ENTIRE WORLD! NOTHING WILL BE
BEYOND US!

MOVING SWIFTLY, TOME USED THE LAST OF HIS POWER TO STRIKE AT THE BLACK LORD ...

THE FIRST BLOW SHATTERED THE DOME.
THE SECOND ONE ENDED THE EVIL ONE'S LIFE.

THE SWAMP WAS SOME KIND OF IMAGE
CREATED BY YOUR MIND! BUT THIS TIME THERE
WILL BE NO MISTAKE!

WITH THE BLACK LORD DEAD, HIS MECHANICAL CREATURE NO LONGER FUNCTIONED ...

NOW OUR PEOPLE WILL RISE AGAINST
THE REMAINING SOLDIERS — AND YOU
WILL LEAD THEM, MY SON!

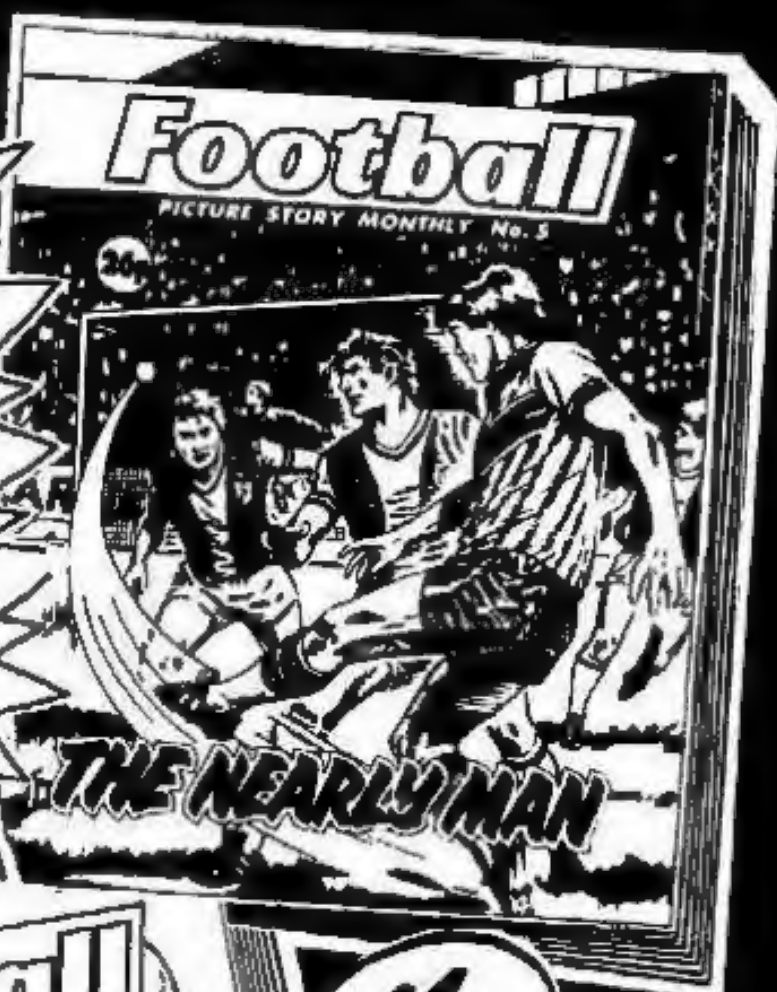
ONLY UNTIL DALOS IS FREE. THEN I MUST
RETURN THE SWORD TO ITS RESTING PLACE,
FOR IN THE FUTURE OTHERS MAY HAVE NEED
OF IT.



SIX MONTHS LATER IT WAS ALL OVER. TOME KEPT HIS PROMISE. THE TIME OF MAGIC WAS OVER — FOR THE MOMENT. BUT WHO KNOWS WHAT LIES AHEAD...?

THE POWER OF RYEMAN STILL LIVES, AND THE SWORD SHALL BE KEPT HERE UNTIL IT IS NEEDED AGAIN.

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THE BLACK LORD

Far, far away, in another galaxy, in another time, savage knights on mechanical steeds enforced the bloody rule of the brutal Black Lord. Frightened citizens meekly obeyed their barbarous overlords, petrified of offending them. But one day somebody would stand up to them . . . because the legend said so!

